

A Journey to Galway

A Journey Throughout Ireland During the Spring, Summer, and Autumn of 1834

Henry David Inglis

1834

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Introductory Observations—Arrival in Dublin, and First Impressions—Deceptiveness of Appearances in Dublin—Striking Contrasts—The Liberty of Dublin, and its Population—Traits of Character and Condition—Improvidence and Ostentation—Dublin as a City—its Streets, Squares, Buildings, and Park—The Mendicity, and other Institutions—Society—Street Population.

It might be considered an impertinence, were I to begin this book, by any general assertion of the ignorance of the British public, respecting Ireland ; there can be no impertinence, however, in acknowledging my own ; and now that I have seen Ireland, I may be permitted to say, that during my journey throughout that country, I found more to correct in my previous impressions and opinions, than in any journey I ever made through any other country. Let me for a moment exclude from this acknowledgment, the social condition of the people of Ireland, and apply it but to all that is visible to the eye,—her cities, towns, and villages ; her mountains, vales, and rivers ; her mansions, domains, ruins, and castles ; the general aspect, in short, of the country ; and—without touching yet, upon the social condition of the people—the *aspect* of the population in town and country ; in their habitations, their dress, and in all that is external. If I was ignorant upon all these things, how profound must have been my ignorance respecting all that lies beneath the surface ; and that can only be come at by patient observation, and anxious inquiry.

I was every where informed that Ireland is a difficult country to know : that in case of attempting to glean opinions on all hands, their contrariety would bewilder me ; or, that if, in endeavouring to avoid this cause of bewilderment, my inquiries took a more limited range, it would in that case be difficult ; if not impossible, to escape the influence of the peculiar opinions of those amongst whom I might be thrown. This difficulty was strongly urged upon me by an eminent and talented judge at whose table, in Dublin, my intended journey formed the subject of conversation ; and he then said, that he could easily imagine two well educated persons, and both equally free from prejudice, returning to Dublin from a journey through Ireland, with views and impressions directly opposed to each other ; according as the letters of introduction which they carried with them, chanced to be to men of one party, or to men of another.

This most to be dreaded cause of error,—a shoal upon which, I fear, many who have written upon Ireland have made shipwreck of truth,—I endeavour to avoid, by seeking and obtaining letters of introduction to men of all opinions, of all ranks, and of all religions; and if, in adopting this course, I encountered that other difficulty, arising from diversity of opinion, I trusted to be able to overcome it, by minute personal observation of the things about which this diversity of opinion existed. I shall give an example of what I mean. I shall suppose that I have an introduction to a landlord who has a great objection to poor laws, and who is, besides, partial to high rents. I say to him, perhaps, “ How are the people off in your neighbourhood,—have you many unemployed labourers ?” Or, I say to him, “ Are rents pretty moderate hereabouts ?” Let it be recollected, that I put these questions in utter ignorance of the character and opinions of the individual whom I address ; for it may happen, that this man is a good and considerate landlord, and no foe to poor laws. He might probably say, in reply to the first question ; “ Indeed the people are pretty well off ; we have scarcely any unemployed labourers hereabouts.” And to my second question he might say ; “ Indeed rents are pretty moderate in this neighbourhood; we have many comfortable farmers hereabouts.” I might put the same questions to an individual of that extreme party, which is desirous of making every thing as bad as possible : and the reply would probably be, “ Egad, half the people here are starving ;” or, “ the whole land in this parish is rack-rented.”

All this is very puzzling ; but the corrective is to be found in personal observation, and more minute inquiry. If I go to the market-place of the little town, and see some scores of men standing with agricultural implements in their hands, willing to be hired at eight-pence a-day without diet, and yet not hired,—then I am sure that there is not constant employment for all who desire it : or, if I go into half-a-dozen cabins, and find every one a filthy hovel, filled with squalid and ragged children, greedily scrambling for a dry potato : or, if I walk into the country, and meet women who have been begging a few potatoes amongst the farmers ; and if I return with them, and find that they are carrying the potatoes home to an infirm mother or father, or husband out of work, or famishing children,—then surely I am able to estimate at its true value the opinion of the individual who assured me, that “ the people were pretty well off.” If, on the other hand, I find few labourers idle, and if I find cabins comparatively habitable, and their inmates luxuriating on potatoes and buttermilk, enough and to spare ; I am then able to correct the assertion of the individual who said half the people were starving.

It is evident, that upon all matters touching the social condition of the people, opinions may be corrected and estimated by personal observation : and although in journeying through Ireland one finds abundant cause for astonishment in the widely varying opinions and contradictory assertions upon every subject connected with the country and the people ; I yet believe that truth may be come at by any one who will take pains to seek it out, and who comes to the search with an unbiassed mind :—and before entering upon my journey, I would only add, that I lay claim to this distinction. I have no purpose to serve, no party to please, no interest to consult. I am in every sense unfettered. To be dishonest, therefore, would be an injury to myself ; and this is, to the public, the best guarantee for truth.

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Early on a fine spring morning, I crossed the bay of Dublin, and entered Kingston harbour a little after sunrise. The bay of Dublin has been so often described, that it needs neither description nor eulogy from me. I will only observe, that if it be deficient in some of those attractions which characterise the rival bays of more southern climes, it will yield to none, in the extent and depth of its arch, or in the form and character of its mountain boundaries.

When I stepped on shore at Kingston, I looked around me with the same curiosity and interest which I have been accustomed to feel on setting foot on other foreign lands ; for my ignorance of Ireland might well justify me in looking upon Ireland as a foreign land, and upon her people as foreigners. This I consider an advantage : for unless a country be so regarded, I question if the traveller will be likely to record those minute and common things, which often throw so much light upon the genius and condition of a people ; and by the omission of which, the graphic character of a work is so much impaired. It was somewhat too early in the morning to find much food for observation. I saw beggars as importunate and as needy as elsewhere—porters as loquacious, but more orderly—waiters as eloquent in urging the claims of their hotels—and a new race, the drivers of the jaunting-cars, vociferous in their recommendations of the superior advantages of their vehicles, in convenience and cheapness, over all rival and more ambitious conveyances.

First impressions of Dublin are decidedly favourable. Entering from Kingston, there is little to be seen that is unworthy the approach to a capital ; and without passing through any of those wretched suburbs which stretch in many other directions, one is whirled at once into a magnificent centre, where there is an assemblage of all that usually gives evidence of wealth and taste, and of the existence of a great and flourishing city.

A stranger arriving in Dublin in Spring, as I did, will be struck, even less by the architectural beauty of the city, than by other kinds of splendour : I allude to the indulgences of luxury, and the apparent proofs of wealth, that are every where thrust upon the eye—the numerous private vehicles that fin the streets, and even blockade many of them ; the magnificent shops for the sale of articles of luxury and taste, at the doors of which, in Grafton-street, I have counted upwards of twenty handsome equipages ; and in certain quarters of the city, the number of splendid houses, and “ legions” of liveried servants. But a little closer observation and more minute inquiry, will in some measure cor-

rect these impressions ; and will bring to mind the well-known and well-founded proverb, that “ it is not all gold that glitters.”

And if caution be necessary in drawing conclusions respecting the wealth of Dublin from what meets the eye, ten-fold caution is required in drawing any conclusion respecting the condition of Ireland, from even the *real* prosperity of Dublin. I saw comparatively few shops closed, comparatively few houses untenanted. No one complained of want of business : and it is a fact, that all the coach-makers were in such full employment, that no contract could be obtained for building coaches on the Dublin and Kingston railroad. But for my own part, I would rather see a lack of employment among the coachmakers, if this were a proof that Irish landlords remained on their estates, and ran jaunting-cars in place of carriages through their counties ; and I would rather see a less competition for fine houses, and smaller fines paid for leases of shops, if this were a proof that there was a less influx of country gentry into Dublin.

But this appearance of even Dublin prosperity is somewhat deceptive. I have already hinted that “ it is not all gold that glitters ;” by which I mean, that the Dublin tradesman sets up his car and his country-house, with a capital that a London tradesmen would look upon but as a beginning for industry to work upon : and I believe it may be asserted with truth, that there is less profitable trade in Dublin now, than was found some years ago. Dublin formerly possessed an extensive, safe, and very lucrative commission trade from both the West Indies and England ; but the facilities of steam navigation are now so great, that the country dealers throughout Ireland, who formerly made their purchases in Dublin, now pass over to England, and there lay in their stocks. This may possibly be good for the public,—I do not know whether it be or not,—I merely state a fact not favourable to the prosperity of Dublin.

In walking through the streets of Dublin, strange and striking contrasts are presented between grandeur and poverty. In Merrion-square, St. Stephen’s-green, and elsewhere, the ragged wretches that are sitting on the steps, contrast strongly with the splendour of the houses and the magnificent equipages that wait without: pass from Merrion-square or Grafton-street, about three o’clock, into what is called the Liberty, and you might easily fancy yourself in another and distant part of Europe. I was extremely struck, the first time I visited the outskirts of the city in the direction of the Phoenix-park, with the strong resemblances to the population of Spanish towns which the pauper population of Dublin presented. I saw the same rags, and apparent Indolence—the result of a want of employment, and a low state of moral feeling : boys with bare heads and feet, lying on the pavement, whose potato had only to be converted into a melon or a bit of wheaten bread, to make them fit subjects for Murillo ; and houses and cottages in a half-ruined state, with paneless windows or no windows at all. I was also struck with the small number of provision-shops. In London every fifth or sixth shop is a bacon and cheese-shop. In Dublin, luxuries of a different kind offer their temptations. What would be the use of opening a bacon shop, where the lower orders, who are elsewhere the chief purchasers of bacon, cannot afford to eat bacon, and live upon potatoes ?

As I have mentioned the lower orders in Dublin, I may add, that the house in which I lived in Kildare-street being exactly opposite to the Royal Dublin Society, which was then exhibiting a cattle-show, I was very favourably situated for observing, among the crowd collected, some of those little traits which throw light upon character and condition. I remarked, in particular, the great eagerness of every one to get a little employment, and earn a penny or two. I observed another less equivocal proof of low condition. After the cattle had been fed, the half-eaten turnips became the perquisite of the crowd of ragged boys and girls without. Many and fierce were the scrambles for these precious relics ; and a half-gnawed turnip, when once secured, was guarded with the most vigilant jealousy, and was lent for a mouthful to another longing tatterdemalion, as much apparently as an act of extraordinary favour, as if the root had been a pineapple. Yet these mouthfuls were freely given ; and I have seen, that where two boys contended who should take charge of a gentleman’s horse, the boy who obtained the preference and got the penny or twopence, divided it with his rival. These were pleasing traits ; and were indicative of that generosity of character which displays itself in so many kindly shapes ; but which is perhaps also in some degree the parent of that improvidence, to which the evils of absenteeism are partly to be ascribed.

There can be no doubt that this trait in national character—improvidence, allied with a love of ostentation—has greatly swelled the lists of absentees, and helps in no inconsiderable degree to keep up the deceptive appearance of Dublin wealth. With few exceptions, a Dublin tradesman who has realized 10,000*l.*, or perhaps a greatly less sum, is above his business, sets up his jaunting-car, becomes the possessor of a villa, and entertains company. Ostentation, too, is displayed in the most singular things. I have counted twenty-seven hackney-coaches and sixteen cars, in the funeral procession of a person in the humbler walks of life : and the passion for display on the part of the deceased's relatives, seemed to have been communicated to his guests, for the carriages were all thrown open ; and from the gaiety of the dresses, one might have easily mistaken the cavalcade for a procession of wedding guests. Many of my readers have seen this—it may be seen any day. But as it struck me, who had never seen it before, as singular, it may be worth telling to others.

Dublin, for its size, is a handsomer city than London. Sackville-street will compare with any street in Europe ; Merrion-square and St. Stephen's-green surpass in extent any of the squares in the British metropolis. There are points of view in Dublin, embracing the principal streets, the quays (for Dublin has quays), and some of the finest public edifices, more striking I think than any that are to be found in London : and although the Irish capital can boast of no St. Paul's, yet, in the architectural beauty of some of her public buildings, she has just reason for pride. I need but name the Custom-house, and the Bank of Ireland, with its magnificent and yet classically chaste colonnades, in proof of this assertion.

The inhabitants of Dublin are justly proud of their Phoenix-park. Neither in extent, nor in natural beauty, will any of the London parks bear the slightest comparison with it. It was here that, for the first time, I saw those magnificent thorn trees, which I afterwards found so constant an adorer of every gentleman's park, and which, even by the highways, greatly outvie the thorns of our English lanes. The Phoenix-park is of enormous extent—said, and I believe truly, to contain nearly three thousand English acres. Like Greenwich-park, it has its mounts, and its fine single trees, and its shady avenues ; but these are more like the avenues of the *bois de Boulogne* ; and besides all this, it has its valleys, and ravines, and extensive groves. In fact, the Phoenix-park, both in extent, and in diversity of surface, is superior to any public park, promenade, prater, or Prado, belonging to any European city that I know. The access, however, is bad. On one side, it is approached through a bad suburb ; and by any way, it is distant and dusty. That it should be the latter, surprised me ; for surely, where there are so many unemployed poor, and such abundance of water, the access to this great resort ought to be deficient in no advantage which labour could secure. The Zoological-gardens have lately been constructed on an eligible part of the Phoenix-park ; and when I visited Dublin, were quite a fashionable lounge. As much as 30*l.* per day, were taken from visitors by the six-penny entrance fee.

Notwithstanding the fascination of Dublin society, my anxiety to commence my journey increased ; for Dublin is not Ireland—and it was Ireland I had come to see. Some of the most interesting among the public institutions, particularly the Bank, and Trinity College, and the neighbouring Catholic College of Maynooth, I resolved to delay visiting until my return to Dublin. There was one institution, however, of which I had heard so much, that I could not leave Dublin without visiting it. I allude to the Mendicity Society. This society may be considered a concentration of all the industrious pauperism of Dublin. In a country where there is no legal provision for even the aged and infirm, some institution of this kind is no doubt essential, not only on a principle of humanity, but for common decency's sake. But such institutions are, after all, miserable make-shifts ; and a visit to the Dublin Mendicity Society will not put anybody in love with that system of voluntary charity, which we are told by an eminent divine is so blessed an encourager of human sympathies.

When I visited the Dublin Mendicity Society, there were 2,145 persons on the charity, of whom 200 were Protestants. The finances were then at a very low ebb ; and the directors of the institution were threatening a procession of the mendicants through the streets, by way of warming the charity of the spectators. This, I understand, has once or twice been resorted to ; and I confess, I cannot conceive any thing more disgraceful to a civilized community. The English reader, who has never visited Ireland, can have no conception of a spectacle such as this. What a contrast to the gaiety of Grafton-street, would be the filth, and rags, and absolute nakedness, which I saw concentrated in the court of the institution ! The support of this charity is a heavy tax upon the benevolent feelings of the Protestant population ; 50*l.* is subscribed by the Protestant, for 1*l.* that is subscribed by the Catholic

population. I was sorry to learn this ; for although it be true that wealth lies chiefly amongst the Protestants, yet it is the middle classes, rather than the wealthy, who support this institution ; and 50*l.* for 1*l.* is surely out of proportion.

I will not enter into any details respecting an institution which cannot, I trust, be a permanent one. I saw some at work, earning a pittance of a few pence per week. I saw hundreds, for whom no employment could be found, lying and sitting in the court, waiting for the mess which had tempted them from their hovels, and the incertitude of mendicancy—which many however prefer ; and I saw an attempt at teaching the young—who, whatever progress they may make in head learning, cannot, I fear, make great progress in morals, consigned, as they are, after daylight, to the care of their worthless parents ; and returning to the hovels in which vice and misery are so often united.

The same day that I visited the Mendicity Society, I visited also two other institutions—the House of Industry, and the Foundling. The former of these is upon an enlarged, and very admirable footing, and is altogether as fine an institution of the kind as I have anywhere seen. The Foundling Hospital was, at one time, an immense institution, providing for not less than 10,000 children. This institution is now breaking up, and is to be superseded by separate country hospitals. The education of the children in this great hospital, having been a Protestant education, the Catholic party in Ireland could not look upon it with much favour; and the new arrangement is generally said to be the result of Catholic interest—I know not with what truth.

No well recommended stranger in Dublin, can leave it without many pleasant recollections ; for it must be associated with much of hospitality and kindness ; and with much of that refinement that lends to society so great a charm. There is in Dublin all the material for the enjoyments of society ; excellent houses ; handsome furniture and appointments ; a sufficiency of domestics ; good taste ; and a will to make all these subservient to the pleasures of intercourse, and the virtue of hospitality.

I should say of the street population of the best quarters of Dublin, that it differs little from that of London ; and that, but for the multitude of jaunting-cars, which are peculiar to the country, one set down in Sackville or Grafton-street, would scarcely perceive any thing un-English in the aspect of the population. But there are differences, which a somewhat closer observation will detect. The ladies dress more gaily, gentlemen not quite so well. Beggars, if not greatly more numerous than in London, are greatly more ragged and miserable looking : but, above all, there is less an air of business than among the street population of London. There is a greater proportion of loungers ; and a less number of those whose quick step and eager look, bespeak occupation and its rewards. Need I say, that there is also a difference between English and Irish physiognomy : but there is no describing this difference. It exists, however ; and will be remarked by the stranger, even on a very cursory glance : and certainly, not to the disadvantage of the Irish females, whose generally high foreheads, and intellectual expression, were not thrown away upon me.

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The Birthplace of Oliver Goldsmith—Pallas-more—the Village of Auburn, and its Identity— Descriptions and Remembrances—Further Ascent of the Shannon up Loch Ree.

At Ballymahon and its neighbourhood, I was not far from the residence of Miss Edgeworth : but I was compelled to deny myself the pleasure of presenting a letter of introduction to that most talented and estimable lady, as well as to the Earl of Longford, at Castle Pollard, owing to this circumstance,—I was anxious to navigate that second great expansion of the Shannon, above Athlone, called Loch Ree ; and there not being, yet, any public steam navigation above Athlone, though such is contemplated, the Inland Steam Navigation Company politely offered me the exclusive use of a steamer to navigate Loch Ree ; and only two days now intervened before the day when the steamer was to be put at my disposal : and I trust it will not be considered disrespect towards Miss Edgeworth, if I resolved to devote these two days, to a visit to the reputed birth-place of Oliver Goldsmith, and to the scene of “ The Deserted Village.”

I know the birth-place of Goldsmith is disputed ; but the undeniable evidences in favour of the identity of “ Auburn,” in this neighbourhood, lead me to adopt the belief universally entertained throughout this county. Pallas-more, the birth- place of Goldsmith, is in the parish of Forghany, county Longford. Sir Walter Scott calls it Femay ; but this is a mistake.

The hamlet of Pallas-more lies about three miles from Ballymahon, and about a mile from the high road which leads to Edgworthstown, and the eastern part of the county. I walked up a green lane, and across some fields, and found myself at the hamlet. Goldsmith’s house is not now in existence : there is only to be seen some small part of the wall of a fence, which seems to have enclosed the orchard. The site of the house is a little triangular field, over-grown with weeds and long grass. A few large ash-trees are scattered here and there ; and close by are a few cottages, a little pond, and a very old orchard, with very old pear trees in it, from which young Oliver, most likely, was wont to regale himself. From this spot, there is a gentle slope down to some low meadows, through which flows the river Inny. The country round is a fruitful enclosed country of corn and pasture. Such is the spot, such the scenes, amidst which the infant genius of Goldsmith was nursed, and where he passed his early childhood.

But it is supposed, that when his father, who was probably curate of the chapel of ease at Forghany, was promoted to a benefice in Roscommon, Oliver was put to school at Ballymahon, where, upon the death of his father, Mrs. Goldsmith came and resided. Entries are now to be seen in a grocer’s books, of articles furnished to Mrs. Goldsmith.

The village of Lishoy, universally known by the name of “ Auburn,” is situated about three miles from Ballymahon, in the county of Westmeath. I visited it ; and spent some most pleasing hours amongst the scenes which Goldsmith has made dear to every lover of poetry and nature : and I do not entertain the slightest doubt, that the village of Lishoy is indeed the Auburn of Goldsmith : though it is equally certain, that he has grafted upon its scenery, English pictures of rural things and country life. Here are still the remains of “ the busy mill ;” there, the decent church still tops the neighbouring hill ; here, is the village preacher’s “ modest mansion,” and there, the circle of stones, within which stood “ the hawthorn bush.”

But to speak a little more in detail. The scenery, I say, fully justifies the belief, that this is the Auburn of Goldsmith. Lishov was Goldsmith’s favourite village ; he mentions it often, and always with enthusiasm, in his letters ; he passed his early years in it, or in its immediate neighbourhood, and could therefore say, “ scenes of my youth.” All the scenery of the poem connects it with this village ; for although the perishable has partly perished, yet all is remembered to have been, as Goldsmith painted it. The preacher’s mansion, now a roofless and windowless tenement, is known to have been the minister’s house; and that minister is known to have been the poet’s brother, and to have been, not the rector, but the curate, on a small salary (perhaps “ 40*l.* a-year”), and moreover to have been loved and respected. The church,—not in the village, or its immediate neighbourhood, where a church generally is—but topping “ the neighbouring hill,” is still seen, as it is described. It is but a few years since the hawthorn bush was in its place ; and opposite, “ near yonder thorn,” stands the alehouse, though not the identical house with the sanded floor, of which Goldsmith speaks. There are many who recollect the schoolhouse : and at some little distance from the village rises a mansion, which belonged to a General Napier, who, some time after the year 1730, is known to have enclosed a domain, and to have ejected the tenantry —

“ One only master grasps the wide domain.”

I had nearly omitted to observe, that in the name of the house where “ news much older than the ale went round,” there is a strong evidence in favour of the claim of Lishoy. The alehouse is, and always has been, called “ The Three Pigeons.” Now, Goldsmith has shown, on more than one occasion, great fondness of this name. In his comedy, “ She Stoops to Conquer,” Tony says, “ I can’t stay, I tell you ; the Three Pigeons expects me down every moment ; there’s some fun going forward ;” and then, we have afterwards the song, called “ the Three Jolly Pigeons.” It is a tradition in this neighbourhood, that between terms at Trinity College, Goldsmith was accustomed to spend his

vacation with his brother at Lishoy, and that he used to resort to “ the Three Pigeons,” where he was looked upon as a prodigy ;—all which is greatly more than probable.

They were hours of most pleasing musing, those which I spent in and about “ sweet Auburn.” It was a fine sunny evening, and a Sunday—

“ The coming day,
When toil remitting, lent its turn to play ;”

for recollect, it was Sunday in a Catholic country, of which Goldsmith spoke ; and indeed the pictures which he gives us of “ sports,” and “ pastimes,” and “ dancing,” would not be applicable to an English village on a Sunday evening. Pastimes literally “ circled in the shade,”—and literally,

“ Up yonder hill, the village murmur rose.”

and it needed but a slender exercise of imagination, to recreate the whole of the living picture which Goldsmith has chiseled upon every memory. There is, however, as about most Irish villages, a deserted look about Auburn ; and sedges and weeds do indeed choke “ the glassy brook.”

There is no doubt, however, that Goldsmith has grafted English life upon Irish scenery ; and that rural life in an English village, and some pictures exclusively English, have been transplanted to Lishoy. “ The nicely sanded floor,” and “ varnished dock,” and “ hearth” “ with flowers and fennel gay,” little resemble the Irish village alehouse, with its mud floor, and turf fire. Indeed, an alehouse has no existence in Ireland, since ale is not the beverage of the people. The honest rustic, too, running after “ the good man,” the Protestant minister,—is not an Irish picture : nor, alas ! did it ever happen in Ireland, that

“ Health and plenty cheer’d the labouring swain.”

But notwithstanding these discrepancies, which are easily accounted for, from the desire which Goldsmith must have felt to recommend his poem to the English reader, by presenting him with pictures which he could recognise, Lishoy is unquestionably “ sweet Auburn ;” and Goldsmith took all his pictures of still life, and some others besides, from his favourite village,—of which he says, in one of his letters, “ If I go to the opera, where Signora Colomba pours out all the mazes of melody, I sit and sigh for Lishoy fireside, and *Johnny Armstrong’s* ‘ last good night,’ from Peggy Golden : or, if I climb up Hampstead hill, I confess it is fine ; but then I had rather be placed on the little mount before Lishoy gate, and there take in, to me, the most pleasing horizon in nature.”

I cannot conclude this brief notice of Auburn, without expressing my obligations to Mr. Hogan of Auburn-house, whose readiness to communicate information, I gratefully acknowledge ; and in whose respect for the memory of Goldsmith, I may perhaps be admitted to participate.

I returned to Athlone, true to my engagement : and next morning, at an early hour, I stepped on board the steam-vessel, so politely furnished to me by the Company. The navigation of the Shannon, above and below Athlone, is connected by a canal ; which is necessary, on account of the rapids below the bridge of Athlone, which interrupt the river navigation. The canals connecting the Shannon navigation are extremely defective in every respect; their depth is generally so deficient, as, at certain times, greatly to impede navigation ; and little or no attention is paid to them. They are not any way under the management of the Inland Navigation Company.

From Athlone, to the point where the river expansion begins, the distance is about two miles. The banks are productive and cultivated, as might be expected in the neighbourhood of such a town as Athlone ; but are not abounding in houses of any description. On entering Loch Ree several islands present themselves,—one of them only, Carberry island, partially wooded. Loch Ree presents a finer expanse of water than Loch Derg ; because, although there are some long lateral reaches, and innumerable bays, the great body of the loch is in a straight line ; and the farthest extremity may also be seen, on first entering it. The course I chose, was first to the promontory of St. John’s, about half-way

up the lake on the Roscommon or Connaught side. Immediately after clearing the islands which lie at the entrance, a finely-wooded bay and mansion, with an adjoining promontory, present themselves. Far to the right, are seen Killynure bay ; and the island called Hare island, thickly wooded, and esteemed the most beautiful on the Loch. From the bay and promontory I have mentioned, we coasted up the lake, passing successively, islands, bays, and promontories ; with hamlets here and there, and a few gentlemen's houses, one particularly, called Newpark, striking both from its situation, and from the fine woods that surround it.

Nothing could be more different than the weather this day, and on the day when I navigated Loch Derg. This day it was calm, sunshiny, and warm. Scarcely a ripple was on the surface; and all the promontories and islands looked down upon their counterparts beneath the water. I regret to say that not one prow dove the waters of the loch but my own. In place of being in the very heart of a fruitful and civilized country, we might have been navigating a lake in the interior of New Holland.

St. John's bay and promontory are striking and interesting ; and being desirous of landing, we came to anchorage in a small deep cove, just round the headland. I found on shore the extensive ruins of a castle, and of some other buildings ; and lingered a considerable while, in admiration of the beautified banks on the opposite side of the narrow bay, and of the perfect noon-tide repose which dwelt upon land and water.

Having satisfied my curiosity, I returned to the vessel; and the paddles were soon in motion. This is the narrowest part of Loch Ree : it is, here, not much beyond an English mile in breadth ; but a little higher, it again expands, though not to the same extent as lower down, and again contracts into little more than wide river breadth, several miles before reaching Lanesbro'. The only point of interest higher up than St. John's, is Quaker's island,—an island of considerable extent, tolerably well wooded with trees of large growth ; and containing ruins of what are called Seven Churches. Three only of these, however, are visible : one ruin is situated about the middle of the island, on open ground ; and another is almost concealed in the wood. As ruins, these remains possess no particular interest.

In returning, we kept towards the opposite coast, and passed between Nun's island, and the two large islands called Inchturk and Inchmore. Nun's island, which lies nearly in the centre of the lake, is partly under tillage ; and Inchmore is a fine, well cultivated island, with a good house upon it. We now steered for Hare island, and soon anchored off the little quay which has been constructed there. I spent an hour or two very agreeably on Hare island, which, I think, will bear a comparison with most of the islands on Killarney. The island is the property of the Earl of Castlemain, who has erected a lodge upon it, in which his lordship occasionally spends a month or two. The island is charmingly diversified with corn-fields, pasture, and wood ; but wood covers the greater part of it ; and in walking through and round the island, one lights upon many such sylvan vistas, as remind one of the pencil of Hobbima. There are some beech trees of enormous growth on Hare island, quite equal to any of the timber that grows on Innisfallen. After leaving Hare island, I partook of an excellent repast, which (unknown to me) had been prepared on board ; and I returned to Athlone, highly delighted with the many attractions of this noble expansion of the upper Shannon, and most grateful to the public-spirited Company, to whose kindness and liberality I had been indebted for the means of gratifying my curiosity.

Loch Ree is very little inferior, in extent, to Loch Derg. The latter is twenty-three miles in length, from Killaloe to Portumna ; the former extends twenty-one miles, from Athlone to Lanesbro'. The average breadth of Loch Derg is probably greater than that of Loch Ree ; but at one part. Loch Ree is wider than any part of Loch Derg. In depth, Loch Ree varies more than Loch Derg. From the Athlone end to St. John's, the depth varies from thirty to fifty feet. Beyond St. John's, up to Lanesbro', it is shallower, varying from ten feet to thirty and upwards. At the bridge of Lanesbro', there are ten and eleven feet of water. In some parts of the Loch, the depth is very great. Near to Hare island, there are 108 feet of water. Loch Ree is the last great expansion of the Shannon. Higher up, are Loch Forbes, Loch Boffin, and Loch Bodarrig, with other smaller expansions. All of these are of sufficient depth for every purpose of navigation ; and the whole course of the river is navigable up to Drumsna, Jamestown, Carrick, and Leitrim, which stands *two hundred and fourteen miles from the mouth of the river.*

At Athlone, I took leave of the Shannon,—afterwards, however, to return to it at Carrick, at a later stage of my journey.

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Journey to Galway—Balinaaloe—Lord Clancarty—Land, Landlords, Fanners, Rents, and Labourers—Middle-men—A moderate Party wanted—Country between Balinasloe and Galway—Galway—Its resemblances to Spanish Towns—Streets, Houses, and Improvements—The people of Galway—Improvidence of the Upper Classes, and its Results—The Colony of Fishermen, and its Peculiarities—Schools and Nunneries of Galway—Friars—Low state of Literature—Emigration—Trade of Galway—Its advancing Prosperity.

The direction of my journey now changed. I had now Connaught and Cunnemara before me ; and, accordingly, I left Athlone the day following my excursion on Loch Ree, and took the road to Galway ; but purposing to halt one day at Balinasloe.

The road between Athlone and Balinasloe is not an interesting one. The country is flat ; and being now in Connaught, much timber was not to be looked for. The contrast between Athlone and Balinasloe struck me forcibly. Balinasloe is a remarkably neat, clean-looking town ; and one perceives, at a glance, that it is not left to chance ; that there is a fostering hand over it ; that some one who is able to serve it, feels an interest in it : in short, that there is a resident and public-spirited proprietor. Lord Clancarty is the owner of Balinasloe : and every kind of improvement finds encouragement at his hands. No stimulus to improvement is more effectual than the practice of Lord Clancarty, in granting leases for ever, on condition of good houses being built.

Everybody has heard of the fair of Balinasloe. It is the greatest fair in Ireland, and has an extensive influence upon prices throughout all the markets of the kingdom. As many as 20,000 head of black cattle, and 90,000 sheep, have often been sold at the fair of Balinasloe. There is not otherwise much trade in Balinasloe, with the exception of a considerable export of oats. The trade of Balinasloe, however, might be greatly benefited by improving the water communication with the Shannon. It is well ascertained that the river Suck might easily be made navigable: and this ought indeed to have been the object, in place of constructing the present canal, which, like most of the other canals in Ireland, is too shallow ; and the navigation of which is burdened, besides, with heavy tolls.

I found great want of employment at Balinasloe ; eight-pence without diet, was the highest rate of wages ; and many laboured for sixpence ; but even at this low rate, full employment was not to be had. A gentleman with whom I was accidentally in company, offered to procure, on an hour's warning, a couple of hundred labourers at four-pence, even for temporary employment.

I was happy to find the character of the landlords about Balinasloe unexceptionable. Lord Clancarty sets an equitable value on such lands as are to be let, and will not let the land at a higher rent, though competition might raise it to double the value put upon it : and he is, besides, one of those landlords who make a distinction between improving and unimproving tenants, giving to the former every encouragement that an industrious man could desire. I believe I am folly warranted, from personal observation and inquiry, in saying that if any man, holding a fair portion of land under Lord Clancarty, be in poor circumstances, it is his own fault. A considerable part of Lord Clancarty's estates in this neighbourhood, is held under middle-men; and the occupying tenants are not generally in comfortable circumstances. Conacre prevails pretty extensively in the neighbourhood of Balinasloe ; and the average rent paid may be stated at 10*l.* per acre.

I was pleased with Balinasloe and its neighbourhood. The streets are wide and clean, and the houses respectable. The green, where the fair is held, is in the outskirts of the town ; and, both in situation and extent, is well adapted to its purpose. I was sorry to find the town stocked with military and police : there had been some recent outrages in the neighbourhood ; and an encampment of troops from Athlone had been formed. These outrages, and all the outrages that occurred in any part of Ireland where I chanced to be, were purely agrarian, or the offspring of private faction, and had no connexion whatever with politics. It cannot, however, admit of the smallest doubt, that, throughout

Ireland, there is, amongst the great body of the peasantry, a feeling extremely hostile to England and English connexion. The sore feelings of a conquered people yet cling to the descendants of the conquered ; there is a hankering after what they deem their rightful possessions ; and an indistinct notion that, one day or other, they will have their right. I have been assured by many in Ireland, that not only do these feelings exist, but that a determination exists also ; and that a fitting time only is waited for, in order to shew it. I candidly confess, I have no belief in this ; and I know that I have found nothing in Ireland to encourage the belief, beyond the assertions of individuals, who appeared to me to be possessed of no exclusive information or extraordinary lights upon the subject.

Amongst the many opinions which I heard in Ireland, connected with the condition of the country, I heard one expression in Balinasloe, which had, at all events, the merit of novelty. It was, that all the evils of Ireland were owing to the system, now gaining ground among landlords, of getting rid of middle-men. That respectable middle-men, who are, in fact, resident yeomen, are useful in a neighbourhood, cannot be doubted : but I feel myself well entitled to assert, that it was a happy hour for Ireland, when landlords first began to perceive that their own interests were concerned in ridding their estates of middle-men. John who holds a hundred acres under my lord, may be a most respectable man : and if he sublet his land to James, Andrew, and Thomas, without giving them the power to sublet farther, he would be a useful resident yeoman. But then, there is no end to the system, when a landowner lets the property slip out of his own hands. James, Andrew, and Thomas also aspire to be middle-men ; and each lets his thirty acres out, in three more portions of ten acres each, at a greatly higher rent than they pay to John. Their tenants, again, find that, owing to the competition for land, more can be got by letting their ten acres, in half-a-dozen portions, than by tilling their own acres ; and thus the estate of one hundred acres is held by no fewer than fifty-four occupying tenants, under thirteen middlemen, in four distinct classes, each of which must live out of the excess of rent paid by those under them, beyond what *they* pay to those immediately above them ; while the real produce of the land be insufficient to maintain the tillers of it.

I found, about Ballnasloe, a considerable sprinkling of men of moderate views, and I am happy to think that this party is on the increase. Ireland stands in need of a moderate party—a party that equally reprobates the extreme views of high Catholic and high Conservative. By a moderate party, I do not mean men who would advocate an imbecile, wavering, and timorous policy ; but men who, along with the advocacy of healing measures, would at the same time uphold the necessity for an energetic and vigorous enforcement of the law ; and who would, above all, reprobate any preference of one party over another.

I now left Ballnasloe for Galway, and passed through an uninteresting country—flat, bare, ill-cultivated, and poor : hedges had now given place to stone walls, which do not improve the appearance of a country ; the cabins, by the wayside, were as bad as any I had seen ; and the inmates apparently as wretched. The only place of the smallest interest, on the road, is the town of Lochree, which contains a ruined abbey, of the early part of the fourteenth century, and which is not altogether unworthy of a visit.

Galway, the capital of the wild West, is a large, and, on many accounts, an extremely interesting town. I had heard that I should find some traces of its Spanish origin ; but I was not prepared to find so much to remind me of that land of romance. At every second step, I saw something to recal Spain to my recollection. I found the wide entries and broad stairs of Cadiz and Malaga ; the arched gateways, with the outer and inner railing, and the court within,—needing only the fountain, and flower vases, to emulate Seville. I found the sculptured gateways, and grotesque architecture, which carried the imagination to the Moorish cities of Granada and Valencia. I even found the little sliding wicket, for observation, in one or two doors, reminding one of the secrecy, mystery, and caution observed, where gallantry and superstition divide life between them. Besides these Spanish resemblances, Galway has a more Popish aspect than any other Irish town. It contains friars, as well as priests ; in the Catholic chapels, devotees are found at all hours of the day ; and in the burying-ground are seen, in hundreds, those little black crosses which distinguish all the continental burying-grounds.

There are many good streets in Galway, and excellent, if not splendid houses ; and with the exception of Cork and Limerick, it had more the air of a place of importance than any other town I had

seen, though less of bustle than Clonmel, or perhaps even than Tralee. In population, Galway ranks, at present, the fifth town in Ireland, coming immediately after Belfast. It contains about 34,000 inhabitants. I found an extensive dock now in course of being constructed, which, it is expected, will have a very favourable effect, when completed, upon the prosperity of the town. Several hundred labourers find employment on the work, at ten-pence per day ; but the work cannot proceed during rain ; and, in this uncertain climate, as at Tralee, on the ship canal, it too often happens that the work-men are dismissed, with a pittance, after working half a day.

The population of Galway, and its neighbourhood, has a picturesque appearance when congregated. The windows of the hotel (the only one in Galway) faced the market-place ; and I could not help fancying the surprise which an Englishman would feel, if, without the intermediate journey, he could be at once placed in the window of the hotel of Galway. The whole female population—congregated in hundreds—wore red jackets and red petticoats ; and not a single pair of shoes and stockings was to be seen throughout the market-place. Boys, with scarcely any covering at all, except a waistcoat, and a shirt, hanging in strips behind and before, were exercising their various juvenile propensities ; and, in every few pence laid out on potatoes (for potatoes were the only commodity at market), there were so many gestures, so much loud talking, and, apparently, such threatening attitudes, that one expected, every moment, to see the market-place converted into a battle field. Most of the laborious work was performed by the women. They appeared to think nothing of whipping up a sack of potatoes, weighing eighteen stone, and trudging away under the load, as if it were no way inconvenient.

The same contrasts are exhibited here, as elsewhere in Ireland, between the upper and lower classes ; and I fear the line of separation is not entirely confined to externals. I had an opportunity of conversing with many landowners here and in the neighbourhood ; and I regretted to find among them so little sympathy with the condition of the poor. I also found amongst them, generally, the greatest terror of any legislative provision for the poor. One great cause of this, and of the oppression of landlords throughout the west of Ireland, is the improvidence of the upper classes. So many of them are distressed men, that their own necessities force them to be hard on tenants, and prompt them to grasp at the highest rent offered. Thus, every class which lives becomes necessitous ; improvements, where ever wanted by the farmer to pay his rent, and by the landlord to keep his head above water, are impossible : and the labour market being over-stocked, the necessities of the poor are taken advantage of ; and the services of the labourer (who frequently works fourteen hours a day) are paid at the rate of sixpence, and even five-pence,—which, during a part of the time I was in Ireland, scarcely sufficed to purchase one stone of potatoes.

The fishermen of Galway form a large portion of the population, but are, in fact, a distinct people. They inhabit that part of the shore which lies on the right of the harbour, apart from the town, and which is called the Claddagh, and were formerly ruled by a mayor, and by laws exclusively their own. This usage, however, has been some time discontinued ; though they still are governed in all matters regarding fishing, by their own by-laws, and are still an interesting and a peculiar people. I spent the greater part of a day in the Claddagh, and found much to interest me. The Claddagh is quite a distinct town : it contains innumerable streets, lanes, rows, and squares, all of cabins, forming altogether a compact and large village. About 1700 fishermen reside here ; and these, with their wives and families, which are generally very numerous, must form a population little short of 6000. The boats, great and small, employed in the fishery, exceed a thousand ; but in this number they reckon the bays of Cunnemara, as far as the Killeries. The manner in which fishing labour is paid, is by a share of the take of fish : *i.e.*, the owner of the boat shares (though not equally) the quantity of fish taken, amongst those whose services he engages.

This fishing colony is on the increase. I noticed a great number of new cabins ; and I was informed that there has been a corresponding increase in the number of boats. This is an industrious people. I went into, and looked into, hundred of cabins ; and there was scarcely one in which I did not see the females busily engaged in spinning, making and mending nets. These they make not only for use, but for sale : profit, however, is small. To spin and make a net. requires from eight to ten days ; the price of the material is 4*s.*, and it sells for 5*s.* ; so that it is hard work to make a shilling a week by this trade.

I found the cabins in this colony very far superior to those of any country labourers I had seen. An air of decency was visible about them all. I saw none without chairs and bedsteads, and a respectable display of crockery; and I may conclude, both from observation and inquiry, that there is not generally any lack of potatoes and fish among the inhabitants. The fish chiefly taken on this fishery, are herring, cod, haddock, and brem.

The people of the Claddagh are perfect exclusives. They live entirely among themselves,—seldom leave the Claddagh. unless merely to take their fish to market ; hold no intercourse with the townspeople ; and marry entirely among each other. The *tocher* brought by a girl on her marriage is generally a share of a boat.

Education is at a very low ebb in this colony. The Claddagh contains no school ; and it is next to impossible to prevail with the fishermen to send their children to schools in town ; and the active life of a fisherman begins at such early years, that even if there were greater facilities for education, but little progress could be made in it.

The winter fishery of Galway supplies a great part of the country ; and the trade of fish-huckster is an extensive one. The fishermen have other means of making money than by their fisheries. When their boats are not employed in fishing, they employ them in the conveyance of seaweed and turf, to and from their own and the more distant bays of Connaught. Boat-building is also a trade with them, not for their own use only, but for sale.

In the town of Galway are several extensive schools,—two of them receiving aid from the new Education Board. One of these belongs to the monks' schools : the other is under the care of the sisters of the Presentation Nunnery : and in each of them, about 500 children are educated. In many respects, I found reason to be pleased with these schools : there appeared to be no want of attention on the part of the instructors ; the pupils seemed to have profited by their instructions in reading and writing ; and one humane regulation particularly pleased me :—a plentiful breakfast of stir-about and treacle is provided for the poor children, before they enter upon their daily tasks. At the same time, I cannot think the funds of the Education Board are legitimately applied in supporting the nunnery and monks' schools. I understood the principle of the board to be, that there was to be no preference of one religion over another ; and that the schools were to be so constituted, that Protestant and Catholic might be able to join conscientiously in their support. But here, in this nunnery school at Galway, are all the paraphernalia of Popery : the building is a convent ; the teachers are nuns, with beads and rosaries ; the chapel has all the accompaniments and distinguishing marks of Catholic chapels of the most Catholic countries ; and it does appear to me utterly impossible that Protestants should countenance schools of this description.

Galway contains several nunneries,—two of them very large establishments ; and there are also three friaries. The mention of this word suggests to me an observation of some importance, connected with the question as to the payment of the Roman Catholic clergy by government. It appears to me to admit of no doubt, that if, by way of disarming the Roman Catholic clergy, government were to adopt some proposition of the kind once submitted in Parliament, it would be absolutely necessary to act up to the letter of that provision in the Emancipation Bill, by which the settlement of friars is prohibited. Otherwise, whatever influence the Roman Catholic clergy lost, would be but transferred to the friars, and nothing would be gained by the measure. Indeed, in many parts, this transference of influence has already partly taken place. Friars, wherever they establish themselves, are in high favour ; and applying to Ireland the observation and experience I have had in other Catholic countries, I would say, that the secular clergy have no chance, in a competition for public favour, with the stricter body.

The Catholic and Protestant population of Galway live together amicably enough. This is most commonly observed, where there is a great preponderance on either side. In Galway, the Protestant population is scarcely one in a hundred.

Galway is much resorted to for sea-bathing ; and along the bay towards the west, a great many houses have been built for the accommodation of strangers. The situation has nothing to recommend it

but the sea : for the country round Galway, and particularly on the western side, is as ugly as flatness, sterility, and want of wood, can make it.

Literature is at a very low ebb in Galway. No regular bookseller's shop is to be found in this town, containing between 30,000 and 40,000 inhabitants : there are shops, indeed, where books may be ordered, and where some books may be purchased ; but the demand is not sufficient to support a shop which sells books solely. I need scarcely say, that the town contains no public or circulating library ; and I could not learn, that either in the town, or in its neighbourhood, any private book society existed.

It is a mistake to suppose, that it is only from the Protestant parts of Ireland that emigration flows. From Galway and its neighbourhood, emigration is extensive, and is at present on the increase. During the early part of the summer of 1834, upwards of 500 had emigrated ; and this was a larger number than had been known to emigrate during the whole of any preceding year. An emigrant ship, with seventy passengers, left the port for America, while I was in Galway. I spoke to a considerable number of the emigrants. They were mostly agricultural labourers, possessed of but very little beyond their passage-money. A few artisans also were amongst the number ; and I spoke to one small farmer, who had a purse of 30*l.*, and who was emigrating with his wife and family. I found no Protestant amongst those with whom I conversed.

Galway enjoys a tolerably large export trade, chiefly in wheat, oats, and flour. This trade has trebled within the last fifteen years ; and there has been a corresponding increase in the buildings required for the export trade, such as corn stores, and corn mills, many of which are very extensive. From 1st September. 1833. to 25th July, 1834. 6,018 tons of wheat were exported, chiefly to Liverpool ; 7,212 tons of oats, chiefly to London ; 1,554 tons of flour; 406 tons of barley ; and 50 tons of oat-meal. The only manufactures of Galway are distilleries and breweries, and one paper mill.

Galway may be considered an improving town ; and there is every probability of a still farther improvement : much is anticipated from the completion of the dock ; and it is also in contemplation to cut a canal from Galway to Loch Corrib, by which an extensive interior district would be laid open to the export trade of Galway. Besides its export trade, Galway possesses a considerable general trade in timber, iron, &c. The retail trade, too, is excellent of necessity ; for, east of Galway, there is no town of any importance nearer than Athlone : and to the west, Galway commands the whole of Cunnemara, as well as the country northward, which lies towards Castlebar and Westport.

I inquired the prices of provisions before leaving Galway. Mutton was 6*d.* per lb. ; beef, 5*d.* ; lamb, 4*s.* the quarter ; pork, 2*d.* per lb. ; a turkey, 2*s.* ; a goose, 2*s.* ; a couple of good fowls, 1*s.* ; eggs, 4*d.* per dozen ; butter, 1*s.* per lb. ; a good cod fish. 1*s.* 6*d.* ; potatoes, 3½*d.* per stone. The wages of a man servant are about 10*l.* ; and of a female servant, half that sum.

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